

## By winning games, the Phoenix Suns rebuilding job just got tougher

Written by

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After turning over most of the roster in the off season to a din of cheers from the fan base, the [Phoenix Suns](#) now face a difficult decision between building up or continuing the tear down.

The team on the court is playing better than expected, 3-2 entering tonight's game, and some key indicators suggest the Suns won't fade back into the West cellar any time soon. Their defensive scheme is solid, and their offense is difficult to defend. Yet, they don't have the star power to make a deep playoff run either.

### Right back where they left off?

*Hello, Worst Place in the NBA. Nice to see you again. Oh, our table in the corner is still reserved for us? Why thank you. Yes, it's been a year since we stopped by. We had a detour, but at least temporarily we're back. We'll take a Evian and a plate of mozzarella sticks to start. Do you mind if we slap this new logo onto the wall over our old one?*

The Worst Place in the NBA is just good enough to draft outside the Top 10, but just bad enough to miss the playoffs. This rebuilt Suns roster was not supposed to sniff this region, but it sure looks like that's where we are headed.

No NBA team wants to win 30-40 games in a season. All you get for your troubles is a middling draft pick that promises another year of mediocre play. The Suns have been there the last several years with picks at the 14, 14, 13 and 12 spots from 2008-2012. Those picks led to a disappointing 2012-13 team that "earned" the #5 overall pick last June, but unfortunately it was a weak draft. [Alex Len](#) will be a good NBA player, but he's not a future superstar. No one available at #5 last June is a future superstar.

### Tearing it down

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When new GM Ryan McDonough took over this team, he saw what everyone else saw: the easiest path back to relevance was to build a loser in 2013-14 and try again for that high pick in the 2014 Draft. It's been billed as the best draft in a decade, with as many as half a dozen franchise-changers waiting to be snapped up. Everyone on the team embraced that goal, and four trades later the Suns were torn apart.

When all was done, the Suns entered the season without a single player who would start for most teams in the NBA. The Suns best returning player, [Goran Dragic](#), wouldn't start on half the league's teams in a PG-rich league. The other starters -

[P.J. Tucker](#)

,

[Eric Bledsoe](#)

,

[Channing Frye](#)

,

[Miles Plumlee](#)

- never started full time for any NBA team before this season.

League wide sentiment was that the Suns were doing a very good job setting themselves up for failure.

### Rising from ashes

But the coaching staff didn't get that memo, and neither did the players. A week into the season, the surprising Suns are 3-2 and quickly building a fan base falling head over heels for the scrappy players on this team. Nicknames are being developed and jerseys are soon to be flying off shelves.

What was once a waste land where turnover was hotly anticipated now becomes a minefield where Ryan McDonough and Lon Babby must tread lightly. Any trades with this team might be met with negative backlash.

The Suns want to simultaneously build a winning atmosphere while not stocking it with enough talent \*yet\* to win consistently until after the 2014 Draft. It's the [Orlando Magic](#) model from last year - get the kids playing right but still lose a ton of games.

### But to where?

But what if that plan gets scuttled? What if they win consistently enough to ruin the 2014 Draft possibilities, but not enough to project playoff wins?

No one wants to be there, drafting 12th again. Sure the Suns have other draft picks in their back pocket - up to three more from 12-30 - but the better the draft the less likely the Suns can trade into a Top 10 pick using those assets. Nay, the Suns plan has their own pick in the Top 10.

On the flip side, if this team won't go away and keep winning games, do you go all in to improve the talent right now? Toronto tried to do that last year, acquiring [Rudy Gay](#) in January for playoff push that ultimately sputtered and cost the GM his job. Houston did it a year ago, acquiring [James Harden](#) to make a successful run. They never bottomed out in Houston and somehow have a contending team a year later.

But if you don't see that superstar available in trade, do you further tear down this team to ensure a top pick? How would a team this happy to be together, this "clean" of spirit, take to a trade of Goran Dragic for a future asset? Or Channing Frye?

That's the minefield. Any attempt to improve the talent or further tear it down would mess with the chemistry of the team, possibly in the negative direction. Chemistry is intangible. You can't control it. And now that the Suns have some good stuff brewing, you don't want to mess with it.

But if you don't make any changes, it's quite possible the Suns are looking at a handful of middling draft picks again.

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